

**SPECIAL ISSUE  
SPRING 2020**

# CORONAVIRUS

## ***INSPIRATION COPD NEWSLETTER***

Respiratory Health Association's newsletter for people living with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), their families, and caregivers

### **SPECIAL EDITION:**

**People with underlying health conditions, including COPD, are at no greater risk of becoming infected with COVID-19 than others; however, they are more likely to experience serious complications if they become infected.**

**This fact, coupled with the expected continued spread in the U.S. and severity of symptoms and number of deaths among seniors, has prompted this special edition of *Inspiration*.**

### **CORONAVIRUS: COVID-19**

Respiratory Health Association has prepared this special "coronavirus" edition of our Inspiration newsletter as a service for our COPD community. We want to make sure COPD patients and their caregivers are well-informed about this virus and that you take proper steps to minimize the risk of infection. Since developments are fast-breaking, we advise you to monitor coronavirus developments via trusted news sources or the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that can cause illness in people. Human coronaviruses are not new—they are common throughout the world and typically cause mild to moderate illness. The novel coronavirus, or COVID-19, is a new respiratory virus first identified in December 2019 as the cause of an outbreak in China. COVID-19 is likely more highly contagious than other highly contagious coronavirus strains such as SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) and MERS (Middle East respiratory syndrome).



## Learn How the Virus Spreads & What Symptoms It Causes

### Transmission of COVID-19

Human coronaviruses are most commonly spread from close contact with an infected person to others through:

- the air, if someone coughs or sneezes;
- close personal contact, like touching or shaking hands; and
- touching an object or surface that has been exposed to the virus, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes before washing your hands.

The current coronavirus, COVID-19, appears to occur mainly through respiratory transmission<sup>1</sup>.

Read on for a list of things you can do to help keep yourself healthy.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/diseases-and-conditions/diseases-a-z-list/coronavirus>

### Symptoms of COVID-19

**Most people who get sick with COVID-19 will develop mild to moderate respiratory illness. However, people who are more susceptible to infection may develop more severe disease.**

**The most common symptoms include fever, tiredness, dry cough, and difficulty breathing. Some patients may also have aches and pains, runny nose, nasal congestions, sore throat or diarrhea.**

**Illness can begin 2 to 14 days after an exposure.**

**If these symptoms sound like symptoms of influenza, you are correct. But the consequences of COVID-19 are potentially more serious, which is why if you experience these symptoms you are encouraged to seek medical attention.**

**Most people infected with the virus — about 80% — recover from the disease without needing special treatment.**

# IMPORTANT STEPS FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH COPD

1. Maintain at least a 30-day supply of your prescribed medications. Check with your insurance provider for refill terms.
2. Check with your oxygen supplier to see how it will deal with COVID-19. It's important to ensure that your routine oxygen needs will be met.
3. Establish a COVID-19 hygiene routine for people entering your home (i.e using hand sanitizer, handwashing, etc.).
4. If home health nurses or aides assist you with household tasks, ask what steps they are taking to ensure prevention practices are in place.

## EVERYDAY STEPS TO PROTECT YOURSELF

- Get a flu shot if you have not already done so. This applies to everyone in your household. While this won't prevent COVID-19, it may lessen its impact as your body can better fight off infection if your condition is not already weakened by influenza.
- Wash your hands often during the day with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer to be sure you've washed your hands for 20 seconds? Hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice. Keep a bottle or two of hand sanitizer nearby.
- Routinely clean surfaces in your home (wipes work great) and avoid directly touching surfaces that may contain germs. This includes your telephone, the TV remote control, gym equipment, and the steering wheel of your car.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands. This is good advice all year round. Once contaminated, your hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. Cough into your elbow instead of your hands.
- Avoid close contact with others who are sick. Be alert when you are in a group setting to avoid contact with those who are sneezing or coughing.
- Stay home and avoid contact with others if you are sick.
- If you have not yet quit smoking, please do so now and give your respiratory system a break. If you contract COVID-19 you will need your respiratory system to be as strong as possible.

# INSPIRATION IS PUBLISHED BY

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This newsletter provides information for people living with COPD and their caregivers. If you think you may have COPD, talk to your healthcare provider.

For more information, contact **Respiratory Health Association** at **(312) 243-2000** or [resphealth.org/copd](http://resphealth.org/copd).

RHA would like to introduce our new Inspiration editor: Khalilah Gates, MD, Assistant Professor of Medicine in the Division of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine. We appreciate her providing her expertise and look forward to working with her on future editions.

## CONTACT RESPIRATORY HEALTH ASSOCIATION

If you would like to have upcoming issues of our free Inspiration newsletter delivered to your home, please contact **Hannah Mestyane** at **312-628-0207** or [hmestyane@resphealth.org](mailto:hmestyane@resphealth.org).

Please feel free to copy and distribute this newsletter. The issue can also be viewed online at [resphealth.org/inspiration](http://resphealth.org/inspiration).

To make a donation to support Respiratory Health Association's outreach and educational programs for people living with COPD, please contact **Anastasia** at **(312) 628-0251** or [aschriber@resphealth.org](mailto:aschriber@resphealth.org).



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## THE SITUATION: CORONAVIRUS TODAY

As of March 3, 2020 just over 90,000 cases have been reported in 73 countries with more than 3,000 deaths. In the United States, the virus has spread to at least 13 states with over 100 cases and several deaths. In Illinois, there have been four confirmed cases and no reported deaths, and as of the printing of this publication, there have been no cases identified in Indiana.

Originally linked to travel to affected areas, there is now evidence of community spread of COVID-19 – that is cases reported among people who reportedly did not have relevant travel history or exposure to another known patient with COVID-19.

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